

BETTY McCOLLUM  
4TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

1714 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-6631  
FAX: (202) 225-1968

165 WESTERN AVENUE NORTH  
SUITE 17  
ST. PAUL, MN 55102  
(651) 224-9191  
FAX: (651) 224-3056

[www.house.gov/mccollum](http://www.house.gov/mccollum)



UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE DEPARTMENT  
AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS  
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET  
SENIOR DEMOCRATIC WHIP  
CONGRESSIONAL GLOBAL  
HEALTH CAUCUS, CO-FOUNDER

November 5, 2009

The Honorable Peter Orszag  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Orszag:

As a member of the House of Representatives Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, and a member of the House Native American Caucus, I want to direct your attention to the lack of funding reaching our American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The federal government's trust relationship establishes a responsibility for services to American Indian and Alaska Native people based on their status as Indians. These services are provided across almost all federal agencies, which makes the task of accountability more difficult but increases the likelihood of continuing to overlook Indian people.

To create systemic change and find overdue solutions for problems that have long been ignored, we must make long-term investments in education and healthcare. In no community are these issues faced – and subsequently ignored – more than with American Indians and Alaska Natives. Many of these issues concern an extreme lack of funding that perpetuates adverse conditions and unmet basic needs.

In July 2003, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights published the report "*A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country*," documenting many of these problems across federal agencies. In their findings, they wrote, "By assessing needs against funding, this report finds evidence of a quiet crisis; specifically that federal funding for Native American programs is inadequate and goes unnoticed because it is unreported, unmonitored, unaccounted for, and inconsistently tracked." Sadly, more than six years later, this is still true.

To begin to right these wrongs, I request the report on detailed funding data for Native American specific programs across all federal departments and agencies. In 2000 and in preceding years, OMB compiled this information on federal Indian spending government-wide at the program level within agencies; within each department; and within many independent agencies.

Currently OMB compiles information on federal Indian spending government-wide chiefly at the agency level within a department or independent agency, but not at the program level (except for a few selected programs). For the President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request please include information showing federal Indian spending government-wide at the program level within each relevant agency, within each relevant department or independent agency.

Please include Indian programs only, meaning programs that are specifically designed to benefit Indian tribes and individuals, or that specifically include Indian tribes and individuals as eligible entities or beneficiaries. Please exclude programs intended for all eligible persons, from which Indians benefit only as citizens, not because of their Indian status. In future years, this program information will critical in assisting Congress during the appropriations process.

Examining all funding at all levels is necessary to track and monitor funding for American Indians and Alaska Natives, as is required by the federal trust responsibility. As long as this information is not readily available to Appropriators and Members of Congress, we do not have the information necessary for oversight to determine essential investments for the Native American citizens we represent.

The words of President Obama say it best: "A budget is more than simply numbers on a page. It is a measure of how well we are living up to our obligations to ourselves and one another."

I am committed to meet our obligations to American Indian and Alaska Native people. We must prevent the first Americans from becoming an invisible people in the eyes of the federal government.

Sincerely,



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress